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HOSPITAL AND TRAINING SCHOOL ADMINISTRATION

IN CHARGE OF
ALICE SHEPARD GILMAN, R.N.

THE STUDENT NURSE¹
BY AMY M. HILLIARD, R.N.

Although we hear much to the contrary, the student nurse is still to be found in hospitals,—to be sure, she is more in evidence in some than in others, but the more she is in evidence the more popular that hospital usually is with the public, for we cannot disguise the fact that no other factor has contributed to anything like the extent to which she has, in making the hospital a place to be sought rather than shunned.

With the advances in surgery, medicine, bacteriology and hygiene, it has become absolutely impossible to minister to the sick in hospitals without the physician's assistant, the nurse. The procedures necessary in the sick room, the clinic, and the operating room can no longer be delegated to other than intelligent, well educated students or graduate nurses.

As the average hospital rates are inadequate to cover not only the ordinary hotel charges, but the cost of medication, surgical and medical supplies, and nursing care, it goes without saying that they can command the exclusive service of graduate nurses, only by more than doubling their rates. Hospitals that are failing to attract students in sufficient numbers are closing their wards. They are, therefore, dependent on the student nurse for the most necessary function of the hospital,—the actual physical care of the patient.

In my opinion there is only one remedy for a shortage of students in any school of nursing. Make that school like other educational institutions. Appoint as principal an educated woman with the necessary experience to enable her to cope with a twofold situation: (a) The school of nursing, (b) The nursing care of hospital patients.

She must be given sufficient financial backing to enable her to select competent assistants and to provide adequate teaching facilities. Her first assistant, the instructor, must have the preparation for teaching required of any other teacher and in addition she must be able by her personality to win the enthusiastic interest of her students and by her observation and supervision to correlate their work

¹ Address given at the meeting of the New York State League of Nursing Education, October 26, 1920.

in the class room with that on the wards. An instructor who fails to carefully follow the practical work of her students loses her greatest opportunity for teaching, for practical nursing is the major subject and to practical nursing should be given the greatest thought.

All students in schools of nursing love the nursing procedures. I really think it is quite human to want to learn to use one's hands effectively and deftly, and the instructor who can apply the theoretical course in such a way as to bring out in the student the keenest interest in her practical work is the one who will be the greatest success, as nursing, whether in the hospital or in any of the avenues of public health, is an intensely practical subject.

The work of the supervising nurses is of almost equal importance to the student with that of the instructor. There is little value in teaching theory and practice in the class room and failing to provide adequate and intelligent supervision for the remainder of the student's course in the school.

One of the most effective means of arousing the interest and of gaining the support of a supervising staff is to make it part of the teaching staff of the school. All supervisors should assist with the actual teaching; the surgical supervisor should be prepared to teach the surgical technique of operating rooms; the medical supervisor to teach medical nursing procedures; the supervisors of special departments to teach the nursing procedures incident to the specialties. Weekly or even monthly councils of the entire teaching staff will go far toward bringing out in the supervising nurses their sense of responsibility for seeing to it that the student not only has correlated supervision during the first three or six months of her course, but that close teaching supervision will be continued until the very end of her training.

It is an absolute waste of time to teach students a nursing procedure in any other way than that in which it is possible to carry it out on the ward. It would leave too much to their judgment and would result in many irregularities of practice. The thermometer, hypodermic or treatment tray of the class room should have an exact duplicate on every ward in the hospital. Students should be taught the simplest and best nursing methods in the class room, and by supervision, these methods should be rigidly carried out on the wards.

Every school of nursing is in honor bound to give a full course of nursing to each of its students. When any clinical material is lacking, affiliation should be made to obtain it. Affiliations are neither new nor are they a hardship. All the large schools of nursing of New York City except Bellevue have affiliated for obstetrics since their very organization. This was not because it was necessary in order to secure

registration, but because it was intelligent and fair to their students. No student should be allowed to graduate without a thorough knowledge of the care of sick children, of the care of the eye, ear, nose and throat and of mental diseases. This is due not only the student, but the public as well. Every graduate nurse should have a good practical knowledge of the care of all the illnesses with which the community is likely to be afflicted. How else can she act intelligently in the district, the school, the factory, or the home?

The student nurse has been the greatest human factor in transforming hospitals from pest houses to places eagerly sought by all classes of those mentally or physically ill to-day, and she is, therefore, the greatest humanitarian of the last fifty years. Where others have given money or thought or occasional supervision, she has given from two to three of the best years of her life. She has not only striven to master underlying principles of the care of the sick, but she has given that care even to its most repugnant details. Her success is evidenced by the demand for her service.

I have emphasized the educational side of the work, as I consider it to be the most important factor in attracting students, as it is in any other school, but the hospital must also provide comfortable living conditions and recreational activities.

The time has come when there should be practical coöperation between schools of nursing and other schools for young women in the same vicinity. If students may major in nursing in some few colleges, why should they not also major in nursing in Sage College of Troy, in the University of Rochester, in Union College, Schenectady, and others in their vicinity? There has never been a time when greater numbers of young women have been seeking higher educational advantages. In Troy we have about one thousand young women students registered in two private schools. I can see no reason why many of these students should not major in nursing as well as in any other subject, if the work were presented to them in a truly educational light, and if the same consideration were given to nursing as a preparation for a professional career as has been given to domestic science and to other really less important fields of work.

The school of nursing and the college should both coöperate to the end that the students will not need to spend additional time in order to get a degree. Administrators of schools of nursing will do well to give this fact earnest consideration when experiencing difficulty in recruiting students. The student nurse has given freely of her time, of her intelligence, and of her very self. In recognition of such service and of the great need for her in every avenue of public health, I ask that she be given in her course of instruction every opportunity for her fullest development.